



A Helping Hand for Global Travelers

Protecting University Employees Around The World

The University has employees that travel to foreign countries to conduct teaching or research activities.

Most trips take place with the employee traveling to and

from the foreign country without any mishap. But what if a situation arises that requires an employee be medically evacuated? And he/she is half way around the world? And you don't speak the language of the country he/she is in?

We recently had an incident in New Caledonia, a UC Berkeley professor conducting research in the mountain forests, fell down a ravine into a fast moving stream filled with large rocks and boulders. The strong undercurrent and rapids carried him down stream and he was thrown up against the many rocks and boulders. The professor suffered a crushed right leg below the knee and extreme bruising to his entire body. He was not found for at least 12 hours when he had to be airlifted to a hospital. Because of the delay in getting medical treatment, a septic infection set in and was spreading. Two surgeries to remove infected tissue were performed while he was in the hospital in Noumé. He was in intensive care there for more than a two week period before moving to a regular post-ward. Once the infection was fully eliminated he was released to come back to the U.S. The professor was the only UC employee on the research trip, the doctors and hospital employees spoke very little or no English, and he was in a country half way around the world by himself. Who's going to make all the arrangements for his safe return to the U.S.? Who's going to communicate with the people in New Caledonia who primarily speak French? How are we going to find out how he's doing? He's too far away to simply get in your car and drive or get on a plane and fly to be there with him. And who will accompany him home?

We immediately engaged the Travel Assistance service provided by the University's Business Travel Accident policy. They can arrange for emergency medical evacuation, translation services, and be the communication line between the medical professionals, the employee's family, and the University. Because there was a 12+ hour time difference, it was difficult for the Berkeley campus to make contact. The Travel Assistance was beneficial in that it is a 24 hour service and they have people working around the clock.

Initially it was uncertain what method of transportation would be needed to bring the professor back to the U.S., particularly if he were unable fly on a commercial flight. The Travel Assistance was on stand-by and ready to assist with making arrangements when the time came. When the professor was released from medical care, he was able to fly home on a commercial flight, but required being accompanied by a medical assistant. Upon his arrival in the U.S. he would need to be transported to a hospital for further medical treatment. The policy provides for payment of emergency medical evacuation expenses. This may include the airlift from the remote area to a hospital, the medical assistant to accompany him on his flight back home, the ambulance transports, and medical services provided during transport.

The "Emergency Medical Evacuation" benefit was an enhancement to the Business Travel Accident policy as of June 15, 2006.

While we hope we never have to use it, it has proven to be a good thing to have. Of greater significance is that many efforts had to be coordinated and we all had to work together to make it happen.

"The successful resolution of this very complicated situation is in great part due to the timely and thoughtful team effort by numerous staff in Risk Management, EH&S, and Workers' Compensation at both Berkeley and Office of the President units, and the staff at AIG and Sedgwick. I was pleased to see all the pieces fall into place immediately after my first contact with Berkeley's Risk Management Office. Our Professor is back home and receiving excellent care."

– Campus Department Director

The Travel Assistance is a 24 hour service and is there to lend a "helping hand", not only in emergency medical evacuations, but they can also assist with other services needed when traveling in a foreign country. While expenses for other travel assistance services may not be covered under the policy, they are available to provide guidance and are a resource for you. Following are some of the services the Travel Assistance can help you with:

- Pre-departure Services – information on immunization requirements, appropriate medical exams and treatments, passport and visa requirements, weather, and travel hazards.
- Lost Baggage/Passport – immediate telephone advice on how to proceed, notification to authorities if you lose your passport and directions for replacing it.
- Insurance Coordination – when seeking medical treatment in a foreign country and assistance is needed with filling out medical claim forms.
- Evacuation and Repatriation – coordination of evacuation if a medical emergency requires being evacuated to a treatment facility or repatriation of remains for loss of life. The policy does provide benefit payment of this service.
- Travel Medical Emergency Services – assistance with obtaining local medical care or hospital treatment, maintain contact with your local and personal physician, provide medical records, and maintain contact with you, your family, employer and physicians.
- Legal Assistance – assistance with arranging help from local attorneys, embassies, and consulates and maintain a communication link with you, your family, and employer.
- Global Assistance – advice on contacting and using services available from consulates, government agencies, translators and other service providers that can help with travel-related problems. The Travel Assistance maintains a central location for translations and communication during emergencies.



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